

**They tore down a little house covered in ivy
that I liked to look at from afar**

For soprano, alto flute, bass clarinet, percussion and piano

Pilar Miralles

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First Prize “Xavier Montsalvatge”

They tore down a little house covered in ivy that I liked to look at from afar

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Duration: ca. 11'

Transposed score

The text

The work, with a text by the same author, represents an allegory of the gradual oblivion of rural areas in the face of urban advancement. The poem refers to the last traces of the past rural life where once the outskirts of the city were, today swallowed up by the demolition orders and real state expansion of the optimized great metropolis. Life in the countryside fades out slowly and softly, and so does this work through the gradual absence of its performers, remembering at the same time the value of silence and a-temporality. The original text is in Spanish. You can find an approximate translation next to each verse.

La echaron abajo. [They tore it down.]

Echaron abajo una casita cubierta de hiedra [They tore down a little house covered in ivy]

que me gustaba mirar de lejos. [that I liked to look at from afar.]

La echaron abajo, [They tore it down.]

antes de que pudiera acercarme para componerla. [before I could come closer to compose it.]

Ahora sus ruinas yacen cubiertas por la nieve, [Now its ruins lay covered by snow,]

en medio del campo. [in the middle of the field.]

Creo que parte de la chimenea sigue en pie. [I think part of the chimney is still standing.]

Quizá con componer sus ruinas baste, [Perhaps composing its ruins is enough,]

pero considero este hecho [but I consider this incident]

una gran pérdida. [a great loss.]

Solo queda allí la luz amarillenta, [Only the yellowish light remains in there,]

luz sucia que las farolas arrojan sobre la noche, [the dirty light that streetlights toss over the night,]

y que me impide ver las estrellas. [and that prevents me from seeing the stars.]

Performance instructions

General remarks

Verbal instructions appear in different formats:

- Boxed text: indications related to actions on the stage.
- Standard text: technical instructions. Longer technical instructions are marked with an asterisk leading to footnotes.
- Italic text: poetic and character indications. The text recited by the soprano is also written in italics.

All performers may encounter **dynamics between quotation marks** at some point in the piece. These dynamics correspond to the intention when emitting the sound, rather than to the real sound result. They are mostly applied to instrumental techniques (such as the whistle tones in the flute, the pizz in the piano, or the use of nails on the bass drum) and, in the case of the soprano part, to the recited parts, in which dynamics greatly depend on the available space for the performance.

All performers will need to **move** at some point in the piece (mainly to go offstage, first the flute and clarinet players, then percussion and, lastly, piano; the soprano part includes other movements on the stage detailed on the score and specific instructions section). The only remark to take into account when moving is to be calm and silent while doing so. It is advisable to perform the piece **without shoes**.

Performers may decide on the **layout of the ensemble** as convenient. Something to take into consideration is that the soprano does not need a specific place to perform among the ensemble's space on the stage (nor a music stand). Nonetheless, at certain moments of the work (rehearsal letters B-C and H, respectively), the soprano will sit down in front of the piano leg oriented towards the audience (supposing that the piano is placed relatively perpendicular to the audience) and lay down under the piano. Performers must allow sufficient space for the soprano to move freely and be visible at these moments.

The work does not require a conductor. All performers may play from the full score: as indicated on page two, **the pulse is not precise** in this piece, there is no metrical hierarchy despite the (merely referential) use of time signatures, barlines and metronomic marks. Performers must be conscious of other players fading in and out around them, as a natural breathing, and taking care of the few spots where some of them coincide together. **Fermatas** whose duration does not depend on a specific action on stage will last around 4-5".

A margin of error can be expected from the indicated **total duration of the piece**, but this error shouldn't go beyond half a minute over or under the duration. This will depend on the pace of the movements, the available space for the performance, the mood of the performers at the time of the concert, etc. As already discussed, there is no metrical organization in the work, sounds appear and go away, the piece begins and ends and, while it lasts, it does so within certain limits that prevent the generation of expectations, bringing about a place to stay. The first tempo indication, *slow, still, evermore*, describes the temporal character of the whole work and represents what remained after *they tore down the little house covered in ivy that I liked to look at from afar*.

In general, an **arrow**  indicates a gradual change from one state to another, and a **thick line**  indicates a maintained action.

Specific instructions for each performer

Most of these instructions appear in each part of the score. Nonetheless, a complete roundup of the techniques used in the piece is offered here, alongside a perhaps more detailed description of them:

Soprano

The soprano varies their position on the stage throughout the piece (starting offstage, then on the back of the stage, sitting next to the piano, on the edge of the stage and, lastly, lying under the piano). It would be ideal, for the sake of a more comfortable performance and greater attention to the facial expression, gaze, etc., that the soprano performed their part by heart. If this is impossible, the soprano could bring the score with them (as it won't be possible to perform from a music stand at any point in the piece) *as a book or notebook to read for themselves*.

As a general rule, the soprano does not perform *for the audience*, they do not refer to the audience with their voice or gaze at any moment, but they create a space of personal expression focused on absence.

From rehearsal letter H, the soprano is asked to whistle softly. It might be the case that a specific performer does not know how to or cannot whistle. In such a case, the performer could hum gently with the mouth closed ("m") in the same annotated pitch. It is also required, at other moments in the work, to recite (spoken text) and to perform sounds like "sh" (breathing out as if to hush someone), "ih" (breathing in, pronouncing the vowel "i" and closing the teeth for greater friction), both with undetermined pitch, and "m" (humming with the mouth closed).




Small descending *glissando* (undetermined ending pitch, used to end a sound accompanied by a *diminuendo*).




The crossed head is used for the recited (spoken) parts and unpitched sounds ("sh" y "ih").



The diamond head is used for the whistled pitches (from rehearsal letter H). At the end of the work, these pitches are accompanied by a line like this  which indicates a weaker and more unstable sound while whistling.

Alto flute (in G)



The diamond head is used to indicate the *whistle tones (w.t.)*. This technique consists of directing a small and slow airflow to the outer edge of the embouchure to obtain a high, weak and unstable whistling-like sound. In order to achieve this, the performer should relax the embouchure, widen the opening of the lips and slightly turn the lip plate outwards. This line  accompanies the notes affected by this technique indicating that the pitch of the resulting

whistles is to freely and randomly fluctuate among the overtones of the fundamental pitch written on the score, which will happen if the angle of the airflow or air pressure is slightly modified.



Small descending *glissando*, performed by slightly turning the embouchure inwards to end a note (normally accompanied by a *diminuendo*).



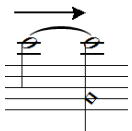
Air sound with *frullato* (the note values are indicated above each note when unclear).

Bass clarinet (in B-flat)

The bass clarinet part is notated following the “French notation”, that is to say, a major ninth above the resulting pitch.



Air sound with *frullato* (the note values are indicated above each note when unclear).



Underblown multiphonic: they can be obtained when reducing the air pressure while keeping the fingering of the upper note. A lower harmonic is obtained, being its pitch dependent on the upper note's register. The resultant overtone is indicated with a diamond head. The arrow, alongside the dynamic marks, guides the gradual change of air pressure.

Percussion

The percussion set includes a vibraphone, crotales (lower octave), a bass drum (*gran cassa*), a medium-sized tam tam, and a medium-sized suspended cymbal.

The required mallets are a bow (for the vibraphone and crotales), a vibraphone hard mallet (for the crotales), vibraphone soft mallets (for the vibraphone), soft beaters (for the bass drum), and a medium-sized coin (for instance, a 1eu coin; for the suspended cymbal and tam tam). The player is also asked to scratch the bass drum with the nails and knock on the tam tam with a knuckle.

The indication *l.v. sempre* can be found at the beginning of each passage: the instrument should be allowed to freely resonate until the sound fades out. Concerning those sounds that require a sustained action (such as the use of the bow or a roll), rests indicate the moment in which that action ends, despite the fact that its resonance will be prolonged beyond them.



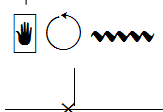
Bowed vibraphone or crotales. This line is also used (from rehearsal letter F onwards) to indicate the use of a coin to scratch the suspended cymbal or the tam tam.



Vibraphone harmonic: it can be obtained by slightly pressing, for instance with a nail or a mallet, over the middle of a tone bar. The lower pitch refers to the tone bar to play on, and the diamond head note, the resulting overtone.



Roll (on the vibraphone, as a tremolo, or on the bass drum).



Gently scratch with the nails of a hand on the batter head (two hands are indicated when the use of both hands is required). The movements of the hand should be more or less circular, and the speed of the movement depends on the dynamics (louder dynamics require higher speed and vice-versa). If the resulting sound is not satisfying (for instance, if the batter head is not made of skin), a thick brush could be used instead.

Piano

As mentioned in the percussion indications, rests usually indicate absence of action rather than acoustic silence, as the *sostenuto* pedal will be depressed during most of the piece and the resonances will be sustained over many of these rests. Long note values and note values that are extended even further by a slur thus acquire sort of a visual reference function.

The piano lid should be fully open. It is recommended to remove the music rack in order to comfortably reach the inside of the piano. The following techniques are performed inside the piano:



The crossed head indicates the *pizzicato* technique, consisting of plucking the strings directly inside the piano. They might be plucked either with the fingernails or the flesh of the finger, as specified on the score. There are certain references on the score to find the specific string, but it is advisable to prepare the piano with pieces of tape on the dampers of the notes involved in this technique (in case the tape is used, the indication on page 9, rehearsal letter G, can be disregarded).



The diamond head indicates the use of muted strings. In this case, the key is pressed while, with the other hand, a finger slightly touches the corresponding string(s). In this piece, this technique is performed on the section of the string below the damper (between the damper and the keyboard, before which there is a horizontal bar from the piano's frame). It is also advisable to mark with tape the strings involved in this technique. When this technique is performed, the player is asked to slide the finger flesh up (towards the damper) and down (towards the keyboard) over the string. This effect, indicated with arrows, will slightly modify the resulting overtones.



This cluster indicates a gentle hit on the copper-winded strings (low strings) with the palm. Even though the cluster on the score is diatonic, the resulting cluster will obviously be chromatic. This technique is performed on two different registers: for the lower register, the palm will horizontally hit the left section of the copper-winded strings; for the upper register, the palm will vertically hit the right section of the copper-winded strings.



The squared head indicates a gentle knocking with a knuckle on the side of a bar of the piano frame. The knocked bar will depend on the available piano. As explained on the score, the second bar from the left normally branches into two. The bar that should be knocked is the one on the right-hand side of the branching bar. The objective is to get a percussive sound that is not too high nor too low, even though the pitch is undetermined.

They tore down a little house covered in ivy that I liked to look at from afar

{ TRANPOSED SCORE }

Text by Pilar Miralles

For soprano, alto flute, bass clarinet, percussion and piano

Pilar Miralles (2023)

Duration: ca. 11'

Slow, still, evermore

The soprano starts singing offstage, somewhere they cannot be seen and from where they are heard "in the distance" (dynamics should be adjusted according to the available space to obtain that effect). Rhythm should be interpreted freely (there is no precise pulse).

Silence matters: sounds are extended and live within it

almost no vib., hesitating

"*mp*" sempre

La
The mouth should be partially open so that, despite the open vowel, the timbre becomes muffled, deaf

Silence matters: sounds are extended and live within it

Silence matters: sounds are extended and live within it

Silence matters: sounds are extended and live within it

Slow, still, evermore

Silence matters: sounds are extended and live within it

The soprano enters the stage through one of the back corners if possible, and sits down on the floor over that area of the stage, perhaps leaning the back against the wall. Movement should be performed calmly, slowly. Serene mourning governs the atmosphere

A (senza misura)

freely non vib. small gliss.
"*p*"

m
(closed mouth)

whistle tones (w.t.)
(fluctuate among overtones ad lib.)

freely

"*mf*"

Wait until soprano sits down on the back of the stage

Wait until soprano sits down on the back of the stage

A (senza misura)

freely

una corda
(depress left pedal until rehearsal letter C)

ppp


*Ed. sempre **

* Sostenuto pedal will be depressed throughout the whole work. There are, nonetheless, two moments in which a pedal change occurs, at m. 14 and 36, marked with the conventional asterisk.

The soprano stands up, walks calmly towards the ensemble, and sits down in front of the piano, leaning the back against the side of the piano leg facing the audience.

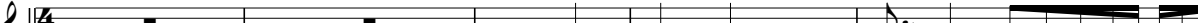
B ♩ = 48 ca. (ref.)
The time signature and barlines do not represent any metrical hierarchy *

3 "p"

S. 

La echaron abajo.
Echaron abajo una casita cubierta de hiedra
que me gustaba mirar de lejos.
La echaron abajo,
antes de que pudiera acercarme para componerla.

The time signature and barlines do not represent any metrical hierarchy *



A - - - /ih/ /sh, sh, sh, sh ...

A. Fl.

B. Cl.

pause and breathe when needed

... continue playing for a few seconds after the soprano ceases reciting

Wait until soprano sits down next to the piano

The time signature and barlines do not represent any metrical hierarchy *

almost no vib.

simile

w.t.

ppp < *pp* > *pp*

ppp < *pp* > *pp*

ppp < *pp* > *ppp*

ppp < *pp* > *ppp*

"mf"

The time signature and barlines do not represent any metrical hierarchy *

prepare vibraphone and crotales

Wait until soprano sits down next to the piano

Vibraphone (motor off) (l.v. sempre) with bow

harmonic: nail against the middle of the tone bar

Crotales (vibraphone's hard mallet)

simile

Perc.

ppp < *p*

pp < *mp*

mp

p

Ped.

*

Pno.

Wait until soprano sits down next to the piano

B ♩ = 48 ca. (ref.)
The time signature and barlines do not represent any metrical hierarchy *

ppp *leggiero*

ppp *pp*

* The time signature and barlines are used as a reference for the ensemble's coordination. The metronomic mark is referential as well: pulses must be interpreted with flexibility, listening to each instrument's fading in and out.

C

Recite the text as in the previous section: grave yet calm voice and unhurried pace. Dynamics are soft: *being closer to the audience, the text is clearer despite the quietude.*

The soprano stands up, walks calmly towards the edge of the stage, and sits down letting the legs hang (in the absence of a stage step, simply sits down legs crossed). The gaze is directed downwards, to the feet.

D ♩ = 48 ca. (ref.)

non vib., almost murmuring

ppp

almost no vib.

pp

21 **"p"**
S. **H**

...yacen cubiertas por la nieve,
en medio del campo.
Creo que parte de la chimenea sigue en pie.

Qui - - - z á

sus

Wait until soprano
sits down on the edge
of the stage

w.t.

almost no vib.

Wait until soprano
sits down on the edge
of the stage

"mf"**ppp**

Wait until soprano
sits down on the edge
of the stage

Vibraphone
(motor off)
(l.v. sempre)

roll (trem.)
(soft mallets)

Crotales
(vibraphone's hard mallet)

(vibraphone and crotales)

Perc.

pizz. (r.h.)
Gently pluck the string
inside the piano with a nail.
The string should be plucked
close to the hammer.
freely

... continue playing rit. ad lib. for
a few seconds after the soprano
ceases reciting.

C

Wait until soprano
sits down on the edge
of the stage

D ♩ = 48 ca. (ref.)**pp**

una corda
(depress left pedal
until rehearsal letter F)

ppp *leggiero***pp****ppp****ppp**

Pno.

tre corde
"pp" sempre

E

Recite the text as in the previous section: grave yet calm voice and unhurried pace. Dynamics are even softer as the audience is even closer. The gaze is directed downwards, as if speaking to oneself.

Wait until the flute and clarinet players go offstage. After this, bend the legs against the chest.

F

♩ = 48 ca. (ref.)

37 **"p"**

S.

Quizá con componer sus ruinas baste,
pero considero este hecho
una gran pérdida.

The flute and clarinet players
stand up calmly, leave their
instruments behind and go
offstage to never come back.

A. Fl.

The flute and clarinet players
stand up calmly, leave their
instruments behind and go
offstage to never come back.

B. Cl.

Perc.

freely
(bass drum)

roll
(soft beaters)

margin → center

... continue playing dim. for a
few seconds after the soprano
ceases reciting.

margin → ...simile

(l.v.)

Wait until the flute
and clarinet players
go offstage.

freely (throughout the entire passage)
(l.v. sempre)
(soft beater)

scratch the batter head with
the fingernails of a hand: circular
movements and dynamic proportional
to the speed of movement



pppp < **pp** > **pppp** < **pp** > **pppp**

ppp

"p" ————— **"mf"** ————— **"p"**

E

Wait until the flute
and clarinet players
go offstage.

F

♩ = 48 ca. (ref.)

freely (throughout the entire passage)

Pno.

tre corde
(until the end
of the piece)

muted strings (r.h.)
Slightly slide the finger flesh between
both strings below the damper (between
the damper and the keyboard). Ref. F1
is the lowest note with double string.

damper ————— frame bar ————— damper
3 5 5 3

8th
"pp" ————— **"mp"** ————— **"pp"**

Ped. sempre

7

41

Perc.

(soft beater)

ppp

fingernails on batter head (simile)

"p" *"mf"* *"p"*

"p" *"mf"* *"p"*

use both hands in circles on each side of the batter head

"mp" *"f"* *"mp"*

Pno.

gently hit the lowest copper-winded strings with the palm (horizontally, r.h.) (l.v.)

8^{vb} *"p"*

muted string (r.h.) (simile; Ref. B0 is the third lowest string)

dampener → frame bar 3

dampener → frame bar 5 → dampener

8^{vb} *"ppp"* *"p"* *"ppp"*

8^{vb} *"pp"* *"mp"* *"pp"*

8^{vb} *"p"*

47

Perc.

(soft beater)

pp

change to tam tam and sus. cymbal

Tam tam

(l.v. sempre)

"mp" center

"p" margin

"mp" center

margin

"p" center

"p" slightly scratch with a coin (from center to margin)

"p" coin (simile)

Pno.

dampener

hit the copper-winded strings with the palm (simile, r.h.) (on the other side of the frame bar, vertically)


(8) *"pp"*

"p" *8^{vb}*

hit the copper-winded strings with the palm (simile, r.h.)


"p" *8^{vb}*


54

(tam tam and sus. cymbal) *"p"*  coin on tam tam (scratch over central area)

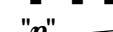

change to crotales

Crotales (l.v. sempre)

with bow *ppp*  *p* vibraphone's hard mallet

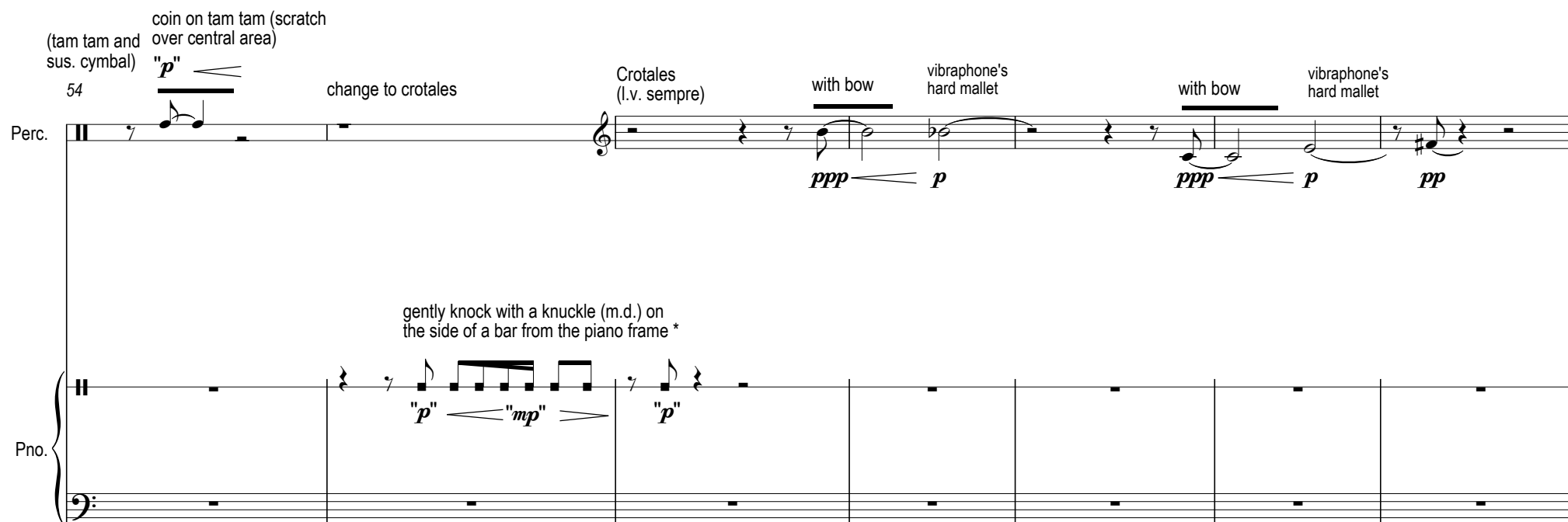
with bow *ppp*  *p* vibraphone's hard mallet *pp*

gently knock with a knuckle (m.d.) on the side of a bar from the piano frame *

"p"  *"mp"*  *"p"*

Perc.

Pno.



* The second bar from the left normally branches into two. The bar that should be knocked is the one on the right-hand side of the branching bar. The objective is to get a percussive sound that is not too high nor too low, even though the pitch is undetermined.

G Recite the text as in the previous section: grave yet calm voice and unhurried pace. Very soft dynamics: *speaking to oneself more than ever.*

Wait until the percussion player goes offstage. After this, the soprano looks back towards the (almost) empty ensemble, stands up, walks calmly towards the piano and lies down under it. *The soprano rests.*

"pp"

brief pause (2-3")
whispering (no voice, just air)
"ppp"

*Solo queda allí la luz amarillenta,
luz sucia que las farolas arrojan sobre la noche,*

...y que me impide ver las estrellas.

brief pause (2-3")

The percussion player walks calmly offstage to never come back.

G

brief pause (2-3")

Wait until the sorpano lies down under the piano.

knock the frame bar with a knuckle (simile, r.h.)

"p" *mp* "p"

press the keys without producing sound (use the hammers as a reference for the pizz.)

(l.h.)

10

64

H freely,
slow, still, evermore

quiet whisting
(the sound does not have to be perfectly stable or clean. Its timbre can vary and durations are flexible).

S. *"p" sempre*

pizz. (r.h.)
Pluck the string inside the piano with the flesh of the finger. The string should be plucked approx. a palm above the damper.

H freely

Pno. *"pp" sempre*

Knock on the bar of the frame with a knuckle (r.h.)

"p" *"pp"*

71

I The whistles are increasingly weaker and more unstable

(senza misura)
freely

S. *"pp" sempre*

I

(senza misura)

Wait until the piano player goes offstage before performing this last whistle.

The soprano rests alone a little longer, which should feel everlasting.

When the sound completely fades out, the piano player walks calmly offstage to never come back

Pno. *"p"* *"pp"*